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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/20): OBAMA's "ERA OF
DIALOGUE" BEGINS

Main Stories:

All papers lead with news of the reconciliation of Arab states at the January 19 Kuwait Arab economic summit and reports on the situation in Gaza. The three papers run lead photos of Arab leaders at the summit. Al Quds runs a photo of Palestinian Authority President Abbas at the summit next to a photo of a Gaza Palestinian youth consoling an elderly man whose house has been destroyed. The photos' caption reads, "the Arabs reconciled... and the catastrophe continues in Gaza." All papers run inside reports on the "post-war" shock experienced by Palestinians in Gaza, as they inspect their destroyed houses. The three papers front page reports, citing news agencies, that an Amnesty International arms expert has confirmed that Israel used phosphorus bombs and further accused Israel of committing war crimes against Gazan Palestinians. The dailies report that most Israeli troops have left the Gaza Strip ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Obama, and quote Israeli sources saying that additional, if not all, forces will have left the Gaza Strip before the inauguration. All papers dedicate one or more inside pages to the inauguration of President-elect Obama, and describe the event as a "historic". The papers add that Obama's term begins with, "nervous hopes" for change. The papers also comment that the Bush "evil axis" era will be succeeded by the Obama era of "dialogue".

In Gaza reconstruction coverage, the three papers front page reports that Saudi King Abdullah announced the end of Arab states' internal division and pledged one billion dollars for Gaza reconstruction. Al Quds quotes EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner stating on January 19 that there are efforts underway to hold a conference on Palestinian issues in Cairo next month. She added that Hamas and Fatah need to end internal conflict before Gaza reconstruction begins. Al Ayyam reports, citing AFP, that UN

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will visit Sderot, Israel and Gaza on January 20. The paper quotes Ki-moon announcing that he will send a needs assessment mission to Gaza to speed recovery there. In ceasefire news coverage, Al Quds' front page quotes a senior Egyptian official announcing on January 19 that Egypt is working on ideas for the sustaining of a Gaza ceasefire. Those ideas will be presented to Israel and Palestinian factions in Cairo on January 22, according to coverage. The papers further report that Egypt's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zaki denied, when speaking to AP on January 19, that Egypt has any written agreement with Israel on preventing arms smuggling into Gaza. Al Quds and Al Ayyam's front pages report on a German proposal to begin assistance to Gaza, followed by efforts to prevent arms smuggling to the Strip, and a subsequent resumption of the peace process. Al Ayyam comments that the German plan was announced by German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier one day before the inauguration of President-elect Obama and that the plan aims to stabilize the ceasefire and aid the reconstruction of Gaza. Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page cites news agencies in reporting that EU foreign ministers will meet Israeli Foreign Minister Livni in Brussels on January 20 and then meet their Palestinian, Jordanian and Turkish counterparts on January 25 to discuss the ceasefire in Gaza. The possibility of a new Palestinian national unity government grabs front page headlines. Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas is quoted in Al Quds and Al Ayyam calling on all Palestinian factions to immediately convene in Egypt to reconcile and form a national unity government. Al Quds and Al Ayyam run front page statements by PA Premier Fayyad, warning parties not to treat Gaza as a separate entity, which he considers, "an Israeli effort to end the Palestinian cause." Fayyad also echoed Abbas' call on Palestinian

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factions to agree to a new national unity government, according to reports. The front pages further note that AFP quoted Palestinian Authority Ambassador to Egypt Nabil Amr announcing on January 19 that Arab states have agreed that Egypt, exclusively, will work on Palestinian reconciliation efforts. Finally, Al Quds' reports that "close aids" to French President Sarkozy, revealed that Europe would be ready to recognize Hamas if it agreed to be part of a unity government.

A public donation campaign to benefit Gazans, sponsored by the USAID-supported Youth Development Resource Centers network under the U.S. Palestinian Partnership (UPP) program in the West Bank, receives positive coverage on inside pages of Al Hayat Al Jadida and Al Ayyam. The donation drive was also featured on local radio outlets and a daytime live report on Al Jazeera. -----
WEEKEND NEWS:

Sunday, January 11

All front pages headlined news that Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire and would keep forces in the Gaza Strip. They highlight remarks by Israeli Premier Olmert that Israel's goals had been met and Hamas' ability to launch rockets "severely weakened." Olmert promised Hamas that continued rocket attacks on Israel would draw a military response whereas a halt to attacks would see the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip, according to reporting. Front pages also run Hamas statements by spokesman Fawzi Barhum stating that, "Israel should stop its aggression, withdraw fully from the Gaza Strip, lift the siege and reopen the crossing points... Hamas remains strong and the resistance will continue..."

Front pages continued daily reporting on the rising death toll of Gazans, the targeting of additional UN facilities, including schools and the use of "highly lethal" weapons by Israel that, "melt away the flesh leaving skeletons."

Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page headlined that Egypt's Foreign Minister Abu Al Ghayt insisted on January 18 that Egypt has made no commitments vis-à-vis the Israeli-American memorandum of understanding regarding arms smuggling into Gaza. The paper notes that Al Ghayt expressed, "the sharpest criticism of Israel since the beginning of the aggression," and runs the quotes, "the memorandum seeks to impose control over the high seas and around the world, and

this is purely the concern of Israel and the U.S."

Saturday, January 10

All front pages gave an update on civilians killed in the previous day's fighting and reported on discussion between Palestinian President Abbas and Ban Ki-moon stressing the need for an immediate ceasefire and exploring the possible deployment of an international military force to the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile Al Quds and Al Ayyam's front pages headlined that, "Gaza Summit calls for the suspension of the Arab peace initiative, ending normalization with Israel, and pursuing Israel in courts." The [Qatar] summit condemned the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and Israel's refusal to abide by UN Security Council Resolution number 1860, according to coverage. Papers also reported that the Israeli office in Doha was closed down and Mauritania announced the freezing of its diplomatic relations with Israel. Finally, Palestinian Authority (PA) spokesman Rahim publicly chided Qatar for noting the absence of PA President Abbas, stating that, "the Prince of Qatar knows very well that President Abbas was the first to accept the invitation to

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attend the Qatar Summit were a quorum established. However, when such a quorum was not established..."

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds editorial is titled, "Meet...and don't leave without an agreement" (01/20): "[Palestinian Authority] President Mahmud Abbas has called for a conference [for Palestinian unity] to include all Palestinian factions, to be held in Egypt... Ismail Haniyah... has also called for national reconciliation... Go to Cairo, Fatah, Hamas, [Islamic]Jihad, Popular [Front for the Liberation of Palestine], and all the other factional leaders and independents, don't procrastinate, and leave narrow factional interests aside. The remains of the homeland are calling you, and your patient steadfast people will hold you accountable."

2) Muhannad Abdul Hamid demands in Al Ayyam under the title, "Post-aggression questions" (01/20): "We should reconsider the[Palestinian] negotiation policy that has yielded no positive results and lost the Palestinian people's confidence... When we go to the negotiation table and achieve nothing... does that not demand that we change the nature of negotiations? We should employ some pressure tactics, think of forms of protest, abstain from negotiations, that is, attempt to change the political process that is within our sphere of influence."

WALLES